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WATER CONSERVATION IN CHINA, 1949 - 1952

Summary: Flood threats that have hung over the farmers of China for years have been reduced during the last 3 years by the government of the People's Republic of China, according to the Minister of Water Conservancy. The amount of farm land inundated by river floods dropped from 100 million mou (1 mou equals 1/6 acre) in 1949 to only 8 million mou by September 1952. The policy of the government has changed during the last 3 years from prevention to control and utilization of floods. Some 20 million people have been employed and 1,700 million cubic meters of earth, equivalent to 10 Panama canals, have been moved.

Basic flood-control programs have been instituted in the important rivers systems of East China, North China, Central China, and the Northeast. Mountain reservoirs, lowland retention basins, dredging of streams, and expansion of irrigation facilities have been the main features of the work on the river systems. Nearly all of the 42,000 kilometers of dikes in the country have been improved.

Irrigation projects benefiting millions of mou have been combined with flood-control projects. In areas where drought is a more common problem than floods new irrigation projects have been developed.

Under the direction of the Central People's Government, the government of Hunan Province has set up an organization and issued plans for a water conservation project for the southern part of the Tung-t'ing Hu area. The work includes dike repairs, building of new dikes, blocking off of backwater channels and widening stream channels. Work is scheduled to begin 15 December 1952 and to be finished by 15 March 1953.

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REVIEW OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS, 1949 - 1952 -- Tientsin Jih-pao, 26 Sep 52

[The following report was issued as a press release to the Hsin-hua She by the Minister of Water Conservancy of the People's Republic of China.]

During the last 3 years, with the enthusiastic aid of the people, flood threats to crops and to the lives of the people that have hung over the land for thousands of years have been basically eliminated. In 1949, more than 100 million mou were inundated; in 1950, 60 million mou; in 1951, 21 million; while this year, up to September 1952, only 8 million mou have been inundated. By 2 June 1952, the irrigated area in northern China was twice that in 1949. In the arid Northwest, where in 1949 there were two thirds of one irrigated mou to each person, there is now an average of one irrigated mou to each person.

During this 3-year period the policy of the nation has changed from the negative one of merely fighting floods to a positive one of controlling them and exploiting them for the general economic benefit of the country. In addition, 20 million people have been directly employed in the program and have moved approximately 1,700,000,000 cubic meters of earth, equivalent to the excavation required for ten Panama canals or 23 Suez canals. In addition to the excavation work, a great many modern type structures have been built.

A. Basic Control Programs Begun on Many Streams

A vast proportion of the 42,000 kilometers of dikes in the country have been improved. On rivers outstanding for their destructiveness, such as the Huai, the I, and the Shu in East China, the Yung-ting, the Ta-ch'ing and the Ch'ao-pai in North China, basic over-all control measures have been undertaken.

In the cases of the Yellow and the Yangtze rivers, the over-all control of which because of their size will require very long-range programs, effective local preventive measures against the worst floods have been carried out.

The program of basic control of the Huai Ho calls for the complete elimination of flood threat over an area of 220,000 square kilometers inhabited by 60 million people, to harness the waters of the river basin for the irrigation of 50 million mou of arable land, to improve transport conditions on 2,000 kilometers of waterways, and to establish a number of electric power stations for the benefit of both agriculture and industry. To this end, three types of work have been undertaken: (1) Construction of 13 reservoirs on the various branches of the Huai Ho and the preparation of 17 retention basins in lakes and lowlying areas along the main stream with the necessary control mechanisms. These reservoirs and basins will have a combined capacity of 20 billion cubic meters of water. (2) Dredging, repair of dikes, and cutting of new channels. (3) Installation of boat locks, irrigation facilities, and hydroelectric power plants. Eventually, continuous waterway traffic by motorboats will be possible from Shanghai northward to the Lung-hai railway, eastward to the Yellow Sea, and westward to the Peiping-Hankow Railway in Honan.

Up to the present, three reservoirs and 15 retention basins with a combined capacity of 10 billion cubic meters have been completed. The dredging of 2,880 kilometers of channels on more than 20 tributaries of the Huai Ho has been completed or partially completed. Also, 1,190 kilometers of dikes have been put in proper condition. The 170-kilometer North Kiangsu main

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irrigation canal, with the necessary irrigation locks, has been completed and 138 submerged locks have been constructed. The largest of these are the Jun-ho-chi deflection lock on the main stream of the Huai Ho, the inlet lock at Kao-liang-chien on the North Kiangsu irrigation canal, the deflection lock east of the Grand Canal, and the control locks on the Tung Fei Ho and the Hsi Fei Ho. The entire control plan of the Huai Ho Basin will not be completed until 1955.

The Yellow River is world famous for its flood disasters, with a reputed disastrous flood every 4 years out of each 10 for the past 25 centuries. Since Communists secured virtual control of the area in 1947, the dikes on the lower 1,300 kilometers of the river in Honan, Pingyuan, and Shantung provinces have been raised to from 1.5 meters to 2.5 meters above the highest previous flood crests. The temporary willow mat facings to prevent dike wash at critical spots have practically all been replaced by permanent stone facings. Furthermore, the method of boring dikes to discover hidden pockets made by rodents or developed from other causes, which was first proposed by a Pingyuan peasant, has been employed and thousands of such pockets filled. Two overflow basins have been provided for, one to reduce the threat of high flood water and one for water backed up by ice jams near the mouth of the river.

Although the Yangtze River does not have as bad a name for floods as the Yellow, historical records indicate that destructive floods have occurred on an average of once each decade. The length and volume of this stream makes flood control a long-range project. The chief effort so far has been exerted in the Ching-chiang section of the Yangtze River in Hupeh Province, where a diversion project has been completed. The project involved the erection of two permanent concrete locks, one 1,054 meters long and the other 336.6 meters long, and the extensive strengthening of the dikes together with installation of a number of submerged locks. These arrangements permit an area of 921 square kilometers of lowlying land between the Ching-chiang section of the Yangtze and the Hu-tu Ho to be flooded, thus reducing the flood levels in the streams and permitting a flood of the proportions of that in 1931 to be controlled. The whole project was carried out in 75 days. This is an example of how quickly and how well the Chinese have appropriated the modern fast methods of the Soviet Union.

In East China a new channel 180 kilometers long has been dug for the I Ho and one 69 kilometers long for the Shu Ho by the people of Kiangsu and Shantung. An area of 16 million mou, formerly frequently flooded, has been delivered from flood threats. These and other conservation measures have contributed to the opening again to traffic of the central portion of the Grand Canal that has been in disuse for a century.

Five streams making up the Pai Ho system in North China all enter the sea through the channels of the Hai Ho a short distance east of Tientsin. The upper reaches of these streams are all precipitous with rapidly flowing currents. Since flood waters are copious, and the Hai Ho cannot carry them all off, disastrous floods have been frequent in this area.

Basic control measures have been initiated on the Ch'ao-pai, the Yung-ting, and the Ta-ch'ing rivers. In 1950, a new channel for the lower reaches of the Ch'ao-pai Ho was dug, as the first step in preventing floods along this stream. Work is now proceeding on a reservoir in the upper reaches.

The dikes on the lower reaches of the Yung-ting Ho have been straightened and strengthened. Three reservoirs are planned for the upper reaches.

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The largest of these, the Kuan-t'ing Reservoir, is now under construction and the basic work will be completed before the flood season of 1953. This will remove most of the flood threat from this stream. Electric power, water for city industries, and irrigation facilities for farmers will be provided for by this construction project. In the lower reaches of the Ta-ch'ing Ho a shallow diversion channel is being dug and during 1951 a number of locks and dikes were built. The whole plan will be completed in 1953. Drill tests and other preliminary activities for the construction of a reservoir in the upper reaches are now going on.

B. General Measures

Throughout the nation the people have been organized to exercise constant vigilance in watching for and repairing all kinds of deterioration in the dikes. Communication systems for warning and patrol systems have been established and are kept constantly staffed. Supplies of regular and emergency repair materials have been accumulated at strategic points and stocks are kept replenished. Under local leadership the people have been building tens of thousands of dams to prevent erosion along the upper reaches of all the large river systems to slow down the runoff during rainy periods and reduce the amount of silt carried to the lower reaches of the streams. Active afforestation programs of the Ministry of Forestry tie in directly with the water conservation program.

C. Rapid Advance in Irrigation

During the past 3 years modern type irrigation engineering projects have been carried out at over 300 places which have proved to be of immense value in drought control.

Among the most important of these are the irrigation projects on the Yellow River in Pingyuan which are already providing irrigation for the first time for 480,000 mou and will eventually serve one million mou as well as insure year-round boat traffic on the Wei Ho between Hsin-hsiang, in Pingyuan Province and Tientsin, a distance of 900 kilometers.

Already, 600,000 mou in the Northeast have received irrigation benefits from the four big projects on the Tung-liao Ho, the P'an-shan, Ch'a-ha-Yang, and the Korchin South Banner (K'o-ch'ien-chi) projects, and eventually 4 million mou will be benefited.

The Huang-yang lock on the Yellow River in Suiyuan is both a flood prevention and irrigation lock. This lock will prevent floods in the Huang-chi canal, and the Yang-chia Ho, and the Wu-la Ho canals and has increased irrigation possibilities to over one million mou.

In Chahar, the irrigation projects under way on the Sang-kan Ho, the Hun Ho, and the Yu Ho are converting flood waters into irrigation waters. At present, over 300,000 mou are being benefited and eventually 980,000 mou will be irrigated. In Shansi, the newly constructed Hu-tou Ho and the Hsiao Ho canals and the Tse-yuan canal will supply adequate irrigation for over 600,000 mou. In Shensi, repair and expansion of the Ching, Wei, Lo, Han, Pao, and Hsu irrigation canals will provide irrigation for another 500,000 mou. The farming activities of the People's Liberation Army in Sinkiang have resulted in marked extension of irrigation activities.

Throughout the country the construction of small-scale irrigation canals and ponds has been carried out on a mass scale by the people under the direction of the local leadership in over 3,360,000 places. Some of these projects have expanded irrigated areas and others have extended the period of possible

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irrigation, thus reducing drought losses. Some 660,000 wells have been dug or repaired and 293,000 pumps loaned. Machine pumps, with a total of 113,000 horsepower, for drainage and irrigation have been newly installed or reconditioned. The old monopolistic and wasteful irrigation policies of the landlord system have been revised in favor of democratic practices, and the most modern Soviet techniques have been introduced. All of this has resulted in great general improvement.

D. Conclusion

Under the new leadership and the new spirit of individual proprietorship among the people, the efficiency of conservation operations has been greatly increased. Formerly, one cubic meter or less was the normal amount of earth moved by one worker daily; the present norm is 4 and 5 cubic meters and high records of 8 and 10 cubic meters have been reached. In 1950, expenditures for conservation work amounted to 18 times the largest amount spent by the Nationalist government in any one year. In 1951, 42 times and in 1952, 52 times as much was spent.

PROGRAM FOR TUNG-T'ING HU AREA -- Hong Kong, Ta Kung Pao, 11 Nov 52

Under instructions from the Central People's Government and the Central and South China Military and Administrative Committee, the Provincial Government of Hunan has drawn the plans and set up the organization for extensive conservation works affecting the south portion of the Tung-t'ing Hu (Lake), to be called the South Tung-t'ing Hu Rectification Construction Project.

The organization consists of a Hunan Provincial South Tung-t'ing Hu Rectification Project Committee of 41 members; Ch'ing Chih is chairman and there are four vice-chairmen. Under the committee was set up a command headquarters with Wen Nien-sheng as chief and three deputy chiefs and Chin Ming as political commissar with two deputies. Lin Meng-fei was designated chief of the business office, Tsao Chi'h chief of the political department, Meng Hsin-yung chief of the engineering department, Hsu Ch'un-Kao chief of supply, Sun Kuo-chih chief of communications, and Chang Ching chief of the sanitation department.

The lake area is rich in fish and is bordered by a rich farming district that produces heavy crops of rice, cotton, and sesame. In this area, 6 percent of the rice produced in Hunan is produced on one percent of the land.

The main features of the project call for redirecting and widening portions of the Tzu Ho and the Hsiang Ho, repair to old or broken dikes, and blocking off of several streams to permit the separation of the waters of the Hsiang Ho and the Tzu Ho and to permit joining of plots of land now separated by the streams.

The work is scheduled to begin 15 December 1952 and to be finished 15 March 1953. It will require the moving of 19 million cubic meters of earth and the construction of 250,000 cubic meters of stone work. It will restore 240,000 mou of old land to cultivation and add 20,000 mou of new land to the arable area. It will result in shortening dike lines by 257 kilometers, or 55 percent of the original length.

Projects of the plan to be carried out include the following:

1. Open certain backwater channels of Hsiang Ho and the Tzu Ho to permit faster flow.

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2. Unite a number of separated dikes and force a number of backwater streams into one channel to enable the farmers more readily to repair the dikes. There are three main phases to this.

a. Widen the Hsiang Ho in a southwesterly direction between Hao-h'o-k'ou and Pi'en-tan-hsia'.

b. Stop up the various backwater channels of the Tzu Ho except the Kan-ch'i Chiang which is to be left open for boat traffic, thus causing the main stream of the Tzu Ho to pass Wang-k'ou-t'an ar' Tz'u-hu-k'ou before entering the Tung-t'ing Hu. Widen the Tzu Ho below Ch'ien-chia-chou and Tz'u-hu-k'ou, at the same time maintaining the main flow via Pa-tzu-hsiao, Pai-ma-ssu, and Lin-tzu-ko'u as a boat traffic route from Ch'ang-sha to I-yang and other places.

c. Repair broken dikes; repair and join the Pao-min, Min-chu, Lo-chi'ng dikes; and repair and unite the Min-hsin and Ting-hsia dikes.

These projects are only the first part of the basic Tung-t'ing Hu conservation program which is tied in with the Yangtze River Conservancy Program.

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